



GROUP RIDING WITH THE CRANKS

Welcome to Mickey Cranks Cycling Club. We are an inclusive club where all are welcome. We celebrate the diversity of our membership and common love of all things cycling. The aim of this document is to help and encourage everyone (Fast, slow, young, old, man or woman) to enjoy group riding with your fellow cranks.

If you are about to embark on your first club ride with the Cranks it might seem a bit intimidating, but don't worry about anything, we have experienced riders to help you on your journey. Every one of us started out new at some point - so turn up and say hi to the other Cranks and you will be made very welcome.



If you are new to group riding that's ok, there are some things you can do before to aid your preparation for the ride and some guidelines you can read to help you pick up the essential group riding skills.

The preparations will make you more comfortable and mitigate if things go wrong (punctures etc.), being familiar with the group riding guidelines will make things safer for you and the others you ride with. Our priority in the club is to ensure your safety and that of those you ride with, but we want to make this an enjoyable pursuit.

How to join?

Joining the club Facebook page is free and straightforward. Just ask to be added to our group on Facebook (link below). We are keen to offer those interested in joining an opportunity to try us out! If after two group rides you want to become a fully subscribed member you can do so on the Clubs pages via British Cycling (link below). Just click on the 'buy club membership' button and once you've completed this you're a Crank!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/mickeycrankscyclingclub/>

[Mickey Cranks CC Club profile \(britishcycling.org.uk\)](https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/clubs/mickeycranks)

We are also affiliated to British Cycling, and you can select Mickey Cranks CC as your club when you join, if you are joining for the first time you can use the link below to get a discount. British Cycling membership is advised (you do not need to be a BC member to ride with us) as it gets you third party insurance.

<http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/clubs/article/20120607-club-static-Club-member-joining-British-Cycling-for-the-first-time--0>



Which group should I pick?

One of the trickier aspects is to determine which group to join. It is recommended to pick a group you think will be below your ability level first time out. Average speed means there will be sections that are harder and faster than the average speed suggests. Once you find yourself at the front of your current group more often than not, it is time to move to a faster group.



Eddies: Average speed as appropriate to the people who attend, distance 20-35 miles as a guideline. This is our social and starter group where we start and finish together wherever possible. As a guide expect to ride between 12-14 mph in groups of 6-8 riders.

Steadies: Average speed 14-16 mph, distance 30-50 miles as a guideline. This too is a social group, starting and finishing together wherever possible in groups of 6-8 riders.

Super Steadies: Average speed 16-18 mph, distance 40-60 miles as a guideline. This is a social group where we will not drop riders if at all possible and ride in groups of 8-10 as a guide.

Supers: Average speed 17-19 mph, 50-70 miles as a guideline. This is a social group, and no rider will be dropped if possible. Decisions to do so will be made by ride leader after discussion with the affected riders. Ride groups of 8-10 as a guide.

Supers+: Average speed 18-20 mph, 50-70 miles as a guideline. A slightly faster paced group ride where the intention is not to drop any riders. Group sizes of 10-12 riders as a guide.

Fast: Average speed 19+ mph, distance 50-70+ miles as a guideline, people occasionally dropped. A faster paced ride with little or no stopping to regroup. Group sizes of 10-12 as a guide.

Registering to ride

Our weekly Sunday club rides are coordinated through Spond, a sports club management app which is free to download (Apple & Android) or can be accessed via the web site (link below). Just sign-up, search for Mickey Cranks, send your request to join and you'll be added to the group. From here you will be able to see details of planned rides and join whichever group you choose.



Spond

Invites for Sunday rides are automatically sent out via Spond at 5pm each Monday with a deadline to respond by 7pm Friday.

Keep an eye on the club Facebook page for details of other organised rides, particularly Tuesday and Thursday evenings, not managed via Spond.

Riding guidelines

Riding is what we are all here for and in a group it's fun, sociable and can be challenging physically. Riding close to other people at speed requires care and adherence to a few basic guidelines to stay safe.

Club safety guidelines and rules for group riding request that a helmet is worn by all riders. Fixed wheel bikes and triathlon bar extensions are not welcome in a standard group road ride. However, specific rides for fixed wheel and time trial bikes can be organised and advertised as separate specific events.

Riding in pairs

We ride in pairs with the pair being roughly two feet apart. On wider roads this formation makes the group compact and easier for cars to overtake.



If there is only one rider in front of you, one of your pair should move to fill the gap and so on through the bunch. If your group is an odd number, the spare rider will always be at the rear of the peloton. Your pair should be close to the pair in front. A spacing of 1-3 feet is ideal on flat or gently inclined road. Avoid leaving big gaps between your pair and the one in front. It is inconvenient for other road traffic and potentially forces cars overtaking to 'split the group'. Leave more space if you are less confident or think you may need to brake soon.

When going downhill at speed leave a lot more space to brake and manoeuvre, tens of feet.

Braking whilst riding in a group

When riding at the front of the group, try to be as aware as you can of what is up ahead in the road to avoid sudden manoeuvres or the need for sharp braking. Avoid using your brakes as much as possible and when you do, be aware that someone is likely right behind you so 'feather your brakes' by softly applying on and off to slow down and indicate that you are braking by saying 'Slowing' loud enough to notify those



behind you of your intention. Similarly, when stopping, indicate this by holding your hand with the palm of your hand facing backwards if possible or saying 'stopping' loud enough to notify those riders behind you. If this all seems daunting, please do not worry. It will very quickly become second nature and you will pick up the essentials from ride leaders and those with more experience.

Going single file



In order to let cars pass on narrower roads or to ride along main roads the call 'single file' will go up from a ride leader or the riders at the front of the group. The rider on the right (closer to the centre of the road) should move smoothly behind the rider on the left. The riders toward the rear of the group on the left-hand side will need to slow to allow the extra space required.

Rotating riders on the front of the group

Everyone should get the opportunity to share the work on the front of the group. Here it can be windy and much harder work than in the bunch.

When you get to the front, initially maintain the same speed as the people before you. Don't surge away – the guys or girls on the front before you may be tired after their turn and need a chance to get to shelter on the back of the bunch. After your initial move to the front at the same speed as those before you, you should then attempt to keep a constant effort as the road goes up or down (this no longer means a constant speed!). As a guide, your turn on the front should be about 5-10 minutes. Less if you need to Remember that a long overexerting effort may need to be paid for later in your ride, do not exhaust yourself early on!

The ride leader will usually indicate the time to rotate from the front though you can also do so if you wish to change. When riding in pairs, you indicate that you wish to retire from the front. Once your time on the front is up, you should pick a suitable piece of road that can accommodate four people side by side and indicate your desire to rotate to the back as a pair. This can be done by pointing up in the air and circling your hand or shouting 'fresh legs' required' to your fellow riders. The pair of riders should move apart to either side of the bunch and begin to 'soft pedal' – 'easing off the gas' and allowing the two lines of riders to pass between them. When you get to the back of the bunch, move smartly back into position behind the last riders and recover from your efforts. Well done.... You'll have made a contribution to your fellow riders... recharge and be prepared to do so again.



Signals

Point to substantial hazards on the road surface with one finger. Call out if significant or numerous hazards (e.g. lots of potholes). Its best to do so by indicating the side ie... Holes Left, Right or Middle depending on which route you plan to take around the obstacle (in Oxfordshire, you'll have lots of practice at this!)

- All fingers outstretched, pointing towards hazard in road – gravel or loose surface. Its best to shout 'Gravel' to fellow riders as this poses a very significant hazard if having to brake or turn.
- Arm bent behind back, elbow making an arrow pointing to large hazard on one side of the road to be avoided where an 'overtake manoeuvre' is required. (e.g. parked car, runner in road)
- Hand straight up (if safe to do so) – puncture or mechanical - also, call out 'puncture'
- Palm of hand held steady facing rider behind – stopping
- Palm level to ground, hand raised and lowered – slowing
- Hand in air making circling motion – intending to rotate from the front to the back of the group
- Arm outstretched to left or right – indicating a turn left or right
- If a car is coming towards the bunch from in front on a narrow road, call 'car front'
- If a car is coming towards the bunch from behind on a narrow road, call 'car back'
- When a car is passing, indicate so to your fellow riders by calling 'Passing'.

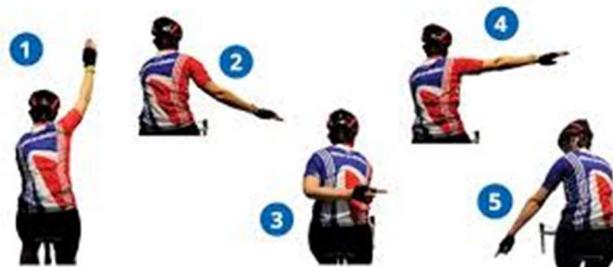
1-Mechanical/puncture

2-Slowing down

3-passing an obstacle
(car/walker)

4- indicating direction for turn

5- Pothole



Dropping

Group riding is a social activity. Stronger riders can take extra lead to assist their fellow riders who struggle. The aim is to ensure the collective enjoyment for all the group. All groups should wait at the tops of hills and junctions for the whole group to reform, recover if required before setting off again, this only works if people pick the appropriate group for their fitness level. Overthinking your fitness or ability will affect others, it is always best to be honest about this as your ride will be much more enjoyable. If you're a strong rider, remember that you may well be fit to go when others



reach the summit though they will need a little time to recover. Likewise, if overtaking to take the lead, make sure that your fellow riders are 'in position and do not surge ahead leaving a gap. This will not help the group and will exhaust the weaker rider even further trying to catch up. If you are clearly holding up a group, its best to ask them not to wait the next time you are dropped and join a slower group the following week. Your ride leader will make sure that you can safely make your way home.

If you are struggling with the pace

Make people around you aware you are finding the pace hard. They can help look out for you. Key to completing rides is getting your nutrition and hydration correct. This is particularly important in hot weather. It may be that you need some additional food. Ask your fellow riders, many of whom will have gels or energy blocks to enable you to recover if you haven't brought these yourself.

Go to the middle of the group and seek shelter from the wind, do not take turns on the front. It is better to finish than blow up taking a turn on the front. Likewise, being out the back however tempting to keep from the wind is also a more difficult place to ride from. Safely nestled in the middle is best to assist your recovery. Always remember, every rider has been there and some days your legs are just not as awake as others.

Being self-sufficient (if you get dropped)

Getting dropped a few times can be part of moving up to the faster groups. You might have to push to your limits a few times to get fit enough to be able to last the whole distance, particularly in the medium-fast and fast groups. It can be disheartening, but do not fear. Every hard mile is a step closer to being able to maintain the pace! Be prepared to navigate your way home. Take a map or GPS device or simply follow the road signs if you are confident with that. If you do not feel safe, speak with the ride leader. He/she will help.

It is particularly important to be self-sufficient if you get dropped. You must be able to fix a puncture (or two) and have the kit outlined in the 'What To Bring' section. If it all goes horribly wrong, a mobile phone should be your last line of defence.

Smashing it

If you chose a group that is slower than your fitness level it is not acceptable to 'smash it'. However tempting, you are riding in a group and this will ruin the experience for the others. Except in the fast group, where anything goes!), ride at that groups pace and chose a faster group next week. If you are on a time constraint, please do not drop to a steadier group with a shorter route planned and expect that others will be able to keep your pace. Use your extra power to help your colleagues along. They will benefit and so will your reputation. The strongest riders in the club are those regularly seen holding back to help their colleagues. this is part of 'being a Crank'



Be courteous to all road users and obey the Highway Code, if you are riding with 'Crank's' you are representing the Club and we will all be judged by your actions.

- If you are on the road, you should obey the traffic laws. This will keep you safe and other road traffic will know what to expect from your movement on the road
- Stop on red lights. No exceptions

- No obscene language, gestures, or road rage. There is no place for this. No exceptions

- As you approach horses follow the following steps without exception. Slow down and indicate from as far away as possible your presence to the rider. Stay slow (irrespective of whether you were smashing a Strava segment!) and keep talking / making noise. Keep saying 'cyclist behind/passing' etc. when passing, give a wide berth



- Say hi to other cyclists and road users

Ride Leaders #respecttherideleader

Each ride will have a Ride Leader that is responsible for gathering the group, starting the ride on time, and helping everyone have a fun and safe ride. They are the 'captain of the ship' and should be respected and not subject to any abuse. The Ride Leader should:

Before the ride starts

- Welcome anyone new to the group
- Brief the route to be followed, pace and any known hazards (cross wind, flooding ice etc)
- Count the numbers in the group
- Divide the group into subgroups if the numbers are excessively high and appoint subgroup leaders

During the ride

- Keep the group together
- Identify and call out any unsafe behaviours
- Identify regroup points and regroup to keep everyone together



- Create subgroups with sub group leaders if the group's fitness abilities are too wide
- Keep count and ensure all are still in the group

Preparation

What to bring:

Food

For a standard club ride of 30-75 miles depending on the group you choose a typical example of what one person might need is:

- 1 Gel (there are lots to choose from in gel or jellies)
- 1 Energy Bar

Drink

In summer 2 bottles of water and 1 in winter, energy drink is advisable.

Repair kit

- Two tyre levers
- Two inner tubes – check they are the correct size and valve type
- Something to pump your tyres with. Try using it before you need it.
- 4mm and 5mm allen keys (most modern bikes use these for many parts) or a bike specific multi tool

Clothing

Always look at the weather forecast and dress appropriately for the weather, if you are new to group riding, just ask on the Facebook and the more experienced riders will help. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mickeycrankscyclingclub/>

Money

The Cranks are big fans of cake and coffee so bring cash/card for the café stop.

Phone

Should the worst happen, and you end up stuck on your own, you can call your recovery team in emergencies.



Mechanical knowledge

Know how to:

- Repair a puncture
- Adjust your brakes

Dropping people from the group (how to help them)

If someone is struggling, you can do several things:

- Slow the pace to allow them to recover
- Check they have eaten / drunk
- Check they are not getting a flat tyre
- Send them to shelter towards the rear of the group (not the very back as they might disappear without the group realising)
- If someone drops off the back a stronger rider might go back to collect them, allowing them to draft the stronger rider back to the group

Eating and drinking enough

There is lots of information on this available in books and online. As a guide, eat and drink little and often (every half hour is ideal).

Making sure your bike is in good mechanical order

- Brakes must work well.
- Tyres should be in reasonable condition and pumped up
- Gears should change acceptably and not throw your chain off
- Your bike generally should not be likely to break down

Our main objective is to have fun



#crankitup





Special considerations for group riding during COVID 19



The Clubs guidance regarding group cycling during the Coronavirus pandemic will be based upon the British Cycling guidance. Government guidance now permits groups to ride together. British Cycling believes that the need to maintain a two-metre distance while riding as a group may present practical difficulties and potential risks. Ride leaders will be responsible for assessing this in relation to their planned routes.

We would also like to reiterate to cyclists the need to be mindful of keeping a distance of at least two metres when overtaking other cyclists and from pedestrians who may be walking towards you on paths or on pavements at the side of the road. Avoid the temptations to pull back in abruptly in front of other cyclists when overtaking and allow some time to avoid others having to cycle in your immediate slipstream.

Never cycle in a group if you are unwell. All Cranks are expected to follow government advice and NHS guidance on self-isolation and testing in the event that you or close contacts are unwell.

When stopping for coffee stops some shops/cafes will require face coverings. A cycling snood is a useful addition though it will be your responsibility to be prepared.

There is still anxiety in the general public and the public perception of cycling and Mickey Cranks club will be affected by our behaviour. Get this right and it will have a significant benefit into the future, get it wrong and it will negatively affect us all.